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A DRAMA

—IN—

TWO ACTS,

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MR. HUDSON'S TIGER HUNT.

—0—
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MRS. HUDSON,..... *His Wife.*

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SCENERY.

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ACT I—Parlor in a hotel in London—nicely furnished.

ACT II—Drawing-room—well furnished.

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TIME—THE PRESENT.

—0—
Time of performance—Three-fourths of an hour.

Mr. Hudson's Tiger Hunt.

ACT I.

SCENE—Parlor in a hotel, London. Mrs. Hudson seated at table, reading.

Enter Mr. Hudson, c.

Mr. H. My dear Lydia, have just received bad news from the Isle of Wight—

Mrs. H. From father?

Mr. H. He writes that my uncle, Andrew Crittenden, has suddenly died in India, and it will be necessary for me—

Mrs. H. Oh, Tom, not for you to go away and leave me!

Mr. H. I fear, my dear Lydia, that I shall be compelled to. The business affairs of the firm are in such a muddle that unless I go immediately to Calcutta, ruin will be the result. My father writes—shall I read you his letter? (*reads*) “Go at once, my dear boy, and send your wife to me. I will take care of her and see her settled in your new home in Richmond. I would go myself, but my gout won’t allow me.” So you see it can’t be helped, much as I regret leaving my bride.

Mrs. H. Oh, Tom, how can I live without you. Let me go, too—I’ll gladly share your discomforts.

Mr. H. No, Lydia, not for a moment could I think of that. In our home at Richmond you’ll wait for me, and with the frequent letters, our time of probation will soon pass away. Come, now, let us prepare for our journey—you to join father, I to start on my long trip. Be courageous, my little wife, and all will be well.

(exit both, R.)

END OF FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE—Drawing-room at Richmond. Two years later.

Mr. H. (*outside*) Here, John, tell your mistress that a friend from India has arrived and desires to see her.

Enter Mr. Hudson, L.

Mr. H. My wife will soon be here. How charmingly she flushed and disappeared from that window when she saw me watching her. I see she does not recognize me—ha! I have an idea! I'll represent myself as a friend of her husband's. I suppose that she'll know me, but it is true that I have grown a tolerably big beard since I went away, and I have become considerably tanned. However, she ought to know me—the beard ought not to make any difference—I suppose she would know me with my head perfectly bald, nose broken, and one arm off. On the other hand she thinks that I am still in Calcutta, for she must have had my last letter saying I would not be home for a month, this morning. I hope my sudden appearance here won't alarm her. But here she comes, and now for my plan.

Enter Mrs. Hudson, R.

Mrs. H. (*to Mr. H., who stands gazing out of window, L.*) May I offer you a chair? I am afraid the open window is too much for you.

Mr. H. Oh, no, not all.

(*facing wife for an instant, then resuming survey of garden*)

Mrs. H. Do let me order a fire to be lighted.

Mr. H. (*turning around*) Oh, no, not for worlds. But the fact is, Mrs.—

Mrs. H. My name is Mrs. Hudson.

Mr. H. Oh, thank you—yes! The fact is, Mrs. Hudson, that I am not entirely reconciled to this abominable English climate. I—ah—that is to say, a man who has existed in groves of mango—ah—has lived on curry and chutnee—ah—with the thermometer standing doggedly at 102 in the shade, is—ah— But I dare say you understand.

Mrs. H. Oh, perfectly, Mr.— I think I have not the pleasure of knowing your name.

Mr. H. (*aside*) Who am I? What name can I say? This is getting exciting. (*aloud*) My name is Judson.

Mrs. H. What a curious similarity. Yes, I can readily believe that people coming home from India find this climate very trying at first, even in summer. My husband writes that the heat in Calcutta has been excessive. Possibly, Mr. Judson, you may have called to give me some news of him? I hope so—I thought his last letter was not written in very good spirits.

Mr. H. (*aside*) That is satisfactory; the lapse of two years has not altered her love for me. (*aloud*) Yes, I can give you some news of him, for a month ago I was at Calcutta.

Mrs. H. Indeed? How delightful! Do sit down, Mr. Judson. It is very pleasant to meet any one who has seen my husband so recently; for I gather from what you say that you have seen him. How was he?

Mr. H. (aside) It is evident she don't know me—should I declare myself as her husband she might faint or have hysterics. I rather enjoy the present situation. Must think up some plausible story. (*aloud*) He was as well as could be expected.

Mrs. H. (in alarm) As well as could be expected? Do you mean that he was ill.

Mr. H. (aside) What shall I say next? (*aloud*) Well, not exactly ill.

Mrs. H. But I do not understand you. Tell me, please, what has happened to him.

Mr. H. (aside) I am in a predicament now. Wish she would settle this difficulty by recognizing me. (*aloud*) Nothing very serious. I dare say he has told you that he has become very fond of tiger shooting?

Mrs. H. Ah, Tigers! Tell me, Mr. Judson, tell me!

Mr. H. Well, he went out tiger-shooting one day as usual—ah—he was accompanied only by his servant. They entered the jungle! Suddenly, and without warning, a huge female tiger sprang upon your husband and bore him to the earth. The native fled for assistance; help arrived, and the victim was found faint from loss of blood, with right arm torn out of the socket, his left eye destroyed, and the calf of his left leg—ah—deeply scored by the cruel claws of the ferocious monster.

Mrs. H. Dear me, how alarming! That fully accounts for his bad spirits. His right arm—

Mr. H. Yes, torn out at the socket, Mrs. Hudson. He has learned to write with his left hand.

Mrs. H. Ah! dreadful. And his left eye destroyed?

Mr. H. Yes, he wears a glass eye, poor fellow.

Mrs. H. It must be agony. And the calf of his leg deeply scored by the cruel claws of the ferocious monster? Terrible misfortune! And when you left him, Mr. Judson, how was he? Will he survive?

Mr. H. (aside) She don't seem to be much alarmed! Wonder if she ain't anxious for me to die? (*aloud*) It is impossible to say with certainty, but you must hope for the best. Let me beg of you, my dear Mrs. Hudson, to keep up your spirits.

Mrs. H. Oh, Mr. Judson, I don't see why I should be miserable. There is very pleasant society down here at Richmond; and, you know, there are as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it.

Mr. H. (aside) The heartless woman! This is how she receives the news of my being mangled and disfigured. (*aloud*) Poor fellow. I assure you that in his delirium your name was very often on his lips.

Mrs. H. Indeed! Then he had not quite forgotten me?

Mr. H. Forgotten you? Oh, no, I think that it is the lot of but few women to have a husband so utterly devoted to them.

Mrs. H. And of but few men to have a wife—

Mr. H. So charming.

Mrs. H. Oh, Mr. Judson! But excuse me. Of course you will stay to luncheon. Do, to please me. You know that a woman hates

solitude little less than small-pox. One moment. I will just go and give the necessary orders. *(exit, R.)*

Mr. H. Well, this is awful. She don't recognize me, and apparently she does not seem to care for me much. She reminds me that there are as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it. That, I suppose, means that if I would only die and liberate her she would promptly marry some one else. A nice instance of the faithlessness of woman. Perhaps I should do well to leave her at once, and never let her know the truth—but I can't do that. I love her still; indeed, I'm afraid I love her more than I ever did. No, I will see this affair to the end. If she is faithless to my memory, then—

Enter Mrs. Hudson, R.

Mrs. H. Luncheon will soon be prepared, and in the mean while you must do your best to amuse me, as there is no one else in the house but the servants. Sometimes, of course, we have delightful evenings here. I know everyone in the neighborhood, and as a married woman, I ask whom I like to my house. You must come one evening, Mr. Judson, and sup with us afterwards.

Mr. H. *(bitterly)* I'm afraid I shan't be here for long. I'm going abroad. I cannot rest anywhere.

Mrs. H. You are worried, I see—I can sympathize with you.

Mr. H. Yes, family matters and disappointments, you know.

Mrs. H. Disappointments! But you are young, and if you will excuse me, not bad looking. Perhaps you have merely lost your heart to one of the young ladies of London.

Mr. H. Oh, no. And, to tell the truth, I am doubtful whether any woman would be worth worrying about.

Mrs. H. Don't be cynical. Perhaps you expect too much from women.

Mr. H. I expect sympathy, fidelity and consideration.

Mrs. H. But, let me ask, do you yourself indulge in those virtues? Ah! men are very inconsistent, I fear. However, I hope you do not think all women destitute of those qualities.

Mr. H. Well, I know to my cost, that some are.

Mrs. H. But you are worrying yourself, I see, although you try to affect indifference. What is it?

Mr. H. Worrying myself? Not a bit.

Mrs. H. I am glad to hear you say so. I don't worry myself. Cosey supper and—

Mr. H. But the probable death of your husband?

Mrs. H. Oh, I am philosophical. We only had been married two days—we only knew each other for a few weeks. What am I to him? What is he to me? Life is still before me.

Mr. H. *(aside)* That is rather plain speaking. I wonder whether she would like to get up a flirtation with me? I will draw her on a little. *(aloud)* Ah! you have happiness within your grasp, and you can make another happy. It is not every man who is so fortunate as to meet with a woman like you. Now I confess I have been unfortunate in my experience. But if I thought that I might hope for your sympathy—

Mrs. H. Surely, Mr. Judson, it would be unwomanly of me to refuse it.

Mr. H. Oh, if I might hope for your sympathy, and look for your

regard and pity, my dear Mrs. Hudson, life, I assure you, would soon assume a new complexion to my eyes. Let us be plain. Can you not make me happy, and bestow your sympathy, your love, and your pity upon one who will value such gifts at their true worth.

Mrs. H. (agitated) Really, I was not prepared for all this. I feel the need of love, love such as yours; but—

Mr. H. (aside) This is my faithful and devoted wife. *(kneeling—aloud)* Dear Mrs. Hudson, I love you! Do you, can you love me?

Mrs. H. I return your love, and—

Mr. H. (rising) Mrs. Hudson, what would your husband say to this? You are a faithless, vicious woman!

Mrs. H. Then why, just now, did you ask for my love?

Mr. H. Because I wanted to assure myself that you were so vicious and so worthless as I now know you to be. As for loving you—I despise you! I leave you to your own wicked thoughts.

(kisses her hand)

Mrs. H. Are you going, Mr. Judson?

Mr. H. Yes, I had better go—it is for the best. We could not be happy. Good bye! *(kisses her hand and goes toward door, L.)*

Mrs. H. Good-bye, Tom!

Mr. H. Tom? Who told you my name was Tom?

Mrs. H. You did, you foolish fellow, about two years ago.

Mr. H. And you knew me, Lydia? *(coming toward her)* You have known me all along?

Mrs. H. No, I did not know you until you told me that tremendous story about the tiger. There was no mistaking you then. And now I know that it is the lot of but few women to have a husband so utterly devoted to her.

Mr. H. And of few men to have a wife so charming. That tiger hunt came near proving disastrous to our happiness, but we are out of the jungle now, and—

Mrs. H. Many years of happiness lie before us.

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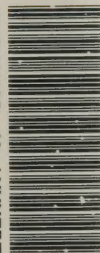
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